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DEMOCRATS WILL MISS HIM. REPUBLICANS, NOT SO MUCH. PHOTOGRAPHER: ANDREW HARRER/BLOOMBERG

CONGRESS

Waxman's Retirement Is a Blow to House Democrats

29 JAN 30, 2014 11:48 AM ET

By [Albert R. Hunt](#)

House Democrats are losing their most skilled legislative craftsman with the retirement of Representative Henry Waxman.

The California Democrat [announced](#) he wouldn't seek re-election this fall. He is the last of the huge [Watergate class](#) of 1974 and has served 40 years in the House. For Democrats, there was no one more influential on issues such as health care, the environment, telecommunications and consumer protection. Waxman is a devout liberal but also an artful legislator who knew how to make deals. Back in the 1980s, Waxman was a key architect of the Clean Air Act and in the 111th Congress, as chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, he guided through the Affordable Care Act, which was signed into law, and a major climate change bill that passed the House but not the Senate.

Waxman also played an important role in overseeing government reform, working

with Republicans such as former Virginia Congressman Tom Davis on a number of investigations including the use of [steroids in baseball](#), whistle-blower protection and the scandal involving the friendly-fire death in Afghanistan of former NFL player of [Pat Tillman](#).

During Waxman's career, both times Republicans took control of the House, he was one of the few Democrats to effectively adapt, highlighting issues and criticizing the Republican agenda. His Los Angeles district is considered a safe Democratic seat.

(Albert R. Hunt is a Bloomberg View columnist. [Follow](#) him on Twitter [@AlHuntDC](#).)

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